United Nations

Press Release

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F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

- Secretary-General announces establishment of commission to demarcate Iraq-Kuwait boundary; presents details of compensation fund to pay back countries for war damages inflicted by Iraq during Persian Gulf war.

- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees expresses "deep concern" over international community's inadequate response to emergency appeal in Middle East.

- Secretary-General appeals through Office of United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator for international assistance to Bangladesh devastated by cyclone.

- General Assembly approves appropriations of about $62 million for Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission, and increased reimbursement to troop contributions to peace-keeping.

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Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar has announced that he will shortly establish a Commission to demarcate the Iraq-Kuwait boundary, as called for by the Security Council in its cease-fire resolution of 3 April.

In a report to the Council yesterday, the Secretary-General said the Commission was to be composed of one representative each from Iraq and Kuwait and three independent experts to be appointed by him. It would set up markers to denote the border, which will follow the 1963 demarcation line agreed to by both Iraq and Kuwait and registered with the United Nations.

Although both countries have agreed to cooperate with the new Commission, Iraq has registered its discontent with the border arrangement. In a letter to the Secretary-General of 23 April, Iraqi Foreign Minister Ahmed Hussein said the question of the legal boundary was pending and unresolved because Iraq had never ratified the 1963 agreement. He called the imposition of the border by the Security Council a dangerous precedent and "an assault on the sovereignty of States". He also said the map the United Nations was using as a guide had not come out of the 1963 agreement and had prejudiced the work of

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the Commission before it even began. The Iraqi Foreign Minister expressed the hope that the three members of the Commission appointed by the Secretary-General would be truly independent.

In a letter of reply, dated 30 April, the Secretary-General assured the Iraqi Foreign Minister that the appointments would be based on the need to ensure independence, competence and integrity. He also proposed that neither Iraq nor Kuwait should be able to "frustrate the work of the Commission".

In a second report to the Security Council yesterday, the Secretary-General outlined the details of a compensation fund to pay back countries for war damages inflicted by Iraq during the Gulf war.

In its cease-fire resolution, the Security Council requested that such a fund be established to pay compensation for "any direct loss, damage, including environmental damage and the depletion of natural resources, or injury to foreign Governments, nationals and corporations, as a result of Iraq's unlawful invasion and occupation of Kuwait".

The Secretary-General recommended that the Commission charged with administering the fund be governed by representatives of the 15 members of the Security Council who would make all final claim determinations.

He proposed that payments to the compensation fund be a percentage, however non-specified, of Iraq's oil exports, and recommended that Iraq's "frozen assets" held abroad be exempt from financing the fund.

The Secretary-General pointed out that with the trade embargo still intact, the fund would not have adequate resources in the short term. He therefore called on the Council to give urgent consideration to the start-up costs of the Commission.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sadako Ogata, today expressed "deep concern" over the international community's inadequate response to the United Nations emergency appeal in the Middle East. Referring to the more than 2 million Iraqi refugees in northern Iraq, she said the need for food was ongoing and the need for medicines "desperate".

A United Nations press officer reporting from Geneva said the appeal of 9 April to donor countries for $400 million had now, three weeks later, only been met with pledges totalling some $95 million. Of the appeal, $238.5 was to finance UNHCR's efforts to avert a tragedy among the Iraqis fleeing conflict and repression.

In a press statement today, UNHCR said there had been criticism over the slow and seemingly confute reaction to the human tragedy unfolding in Iran and Turkey. However, it said, UNHCR was not able to mount massive relief operations on credit. At a time when Governments were urging the United Nations to take over and coordinate an emergency aid programme of large

dimensions it was vital that adequate resources be put at its disposal. If further special allocations were not made immediately, the agency said, "the entire humanitarian effort will be in dire jeopardy".

In related news, a United Nations spokesman today told correspondents that the Secretary-General had expressed "dismay and surprise" at British press reports which were critical of the United Nations role in the humanitarian relief efforts in Iraq. The spokesman said the reports did not reflect in any way the situation as it has been conveyed to the Secretary-General during meetings on Monday with representatives of France, the United Kingdom and the United States, who are involved in the security operations in the area. However, when asked by the Secretary-General, the representatives of the three Western countries had not given any clarification of their position.

The spokesman said the Secretary-General had asked Under-Secretary-General Marrack Goulding and Sadruddin Aga Khan, Executive Delegate for the United Nations Inter-Agency Humanitarian Programme, to go to Baghdad next week to discuss various aspects of the situation with the Iraqi authorities.

In a separate development, the Security Council held consultations this afternoon to discuss a draft resolution on a United Nations mission -- to be known as ONUSAL -- to monitor the agreement signed in San José, Costa Rica, on 26 July 1990 by the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) on a cease-fire. The Council will have a formal meeting on Monday morning, 6 May, on the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA).

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A United Nations official said today that the Secretary-General had launched an appeal to the international community to respond generously to the plight of Bangladesh through the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) in Geneva.

In a report today, UNDRO said the damage caused by the cyclone and the tidal wave was unprecedented, the floods of 1987 and 1988 notwithstanding. The latest information from Dhaka put the number of dead at over 40,000. The agency said the total figure was probably much higher as many areas could not yet be reached.

The UNDRO said the most urgently needed relief items were helicopters, flat bottom boats, water and ready-to-eat food, tents, cooking utensils and medicaments. It said that since many of the items were available locally, cash contributions were most urgent and were the most efficient way to proceed.

The United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, M'Hamed Essaafi, was leaving Geneva for Bangladesh to assess the situation with the Government, the agency said.

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In a related development, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) announced today that it was advancing $1 million from its Emergency Reserve Fund to permit immediate procurement of medicines, oral rehydration salts, water purifying tablets and other emergency survival items.

In addition, UNICEF was seeking $5 million in emergency funds primarily to take immediate steps to restore village water systems devastated by the storm.

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Appropriations totalling $60,977,000 to cover operation costs for the first six months of the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) were approved this morning by the General Assembly.

The Assembly acted without a vote to adopt a resolution on financing UNIKOM which was based on recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ).

The appropriation included $900,000 already authorized by the Secretary-General for start-up costs. Should the Security Council decide to renew the Mission's mandate, approval of additional appropriations would be required.

By the terms of the resolution adopted today, Member countries are to be assessed for contributions to the Mission. They are also invited to contribute cash, services and supplies for the Mission on a voluntary basis.

Also today, the Assembly approved a 4 per cent increase in reimbursement rates, effective 1 July 1991, to States contributing troops to peace-keeping operations. It took that action by adopting, without a vote, a resolution as amended by Ireland.

The Assembly also approved, without a vote, a 26-Power draft resolution calling on all States to contribute generously to reconstruction efforts in Costa Rica and Panama in the wake of damage caused by an earthquake on 22 April.

The President of the Assembly, Guido de Marco (Malta), said a draft resolution on disaster assistance to Bangladesh and another on emergency assistance to Haiti would be issued shortly.

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